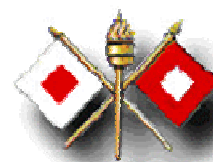




The Desert Voice

19-25 July 2004



COMMANDER'S CORNER

The Battalion Commander, LTC Garrison, left his fine soldiers here in Iraq to go to some supposedly, important meeting in Tampa, Florida. So the XO, MAJ Self, was left here to fill in for him during his absence. Well, we all know this portion of the newsletter is normally written by LTC Garrison, which one would assume that MAJ Self would be writing it this week...but that is not the case. It appears that MAJ Self underestimated the amount of work the Battalion Commander does on a daily basis. He has made several comments in the past that the Battalion Commander doesn't really do anything, the XO does all of the work. Well... since the Battalion Commander's departure, the XO has been overwhelmed with emails, phone calls, and important missions, such as, throwing a football around the ALOC with the Battalion S3, MAJ Withee. Speaking of which, since the Battalion Commander has left, it seems like the other field grades have been having quite a good time holding down the fort. They have done a great job of delegating missions to the staff—a perfect example being this newsletter. And since the LTC didn't take me with him to enjoy the sun in Florida, I think I will take this opportunity to tell you a little about my bosses, but for my own job security, I will state that not all of this article will be based on 100% of the truth.

First off, let me say that since LTC Garrison's departure our network has been green (for those non-signal folks, means everything is working properly) and all of our missions have occurred without a snag. To the untrained observer one might question just what impact the Battalion Commander actu-

ally has on the Battalion on a daily basis. And since the XO and the S3 have been reverting back to their fraternity days, focusing more on the tour de France then the network, watching movies like animal house and old school in the evenings and developing party ideas using the Greek alphabet, it is becoming obvious that the value of our field grades is dubious. I have even heard them describe the LTC's trip as their spring break.

What I have noticed is the work days have shortened and the uniform standard has lowered. Which for most of us, is a welcomed change. (Well, that is a lie, but since I am embellishing this story anyway and probably going to get fired, I thought I would throw it in there for the fun of it). I guess there is something to the saying "When the cat's away, the mice will play." So with the field grades planning their nightly poker and dart game in the next office, you have the rest of us wondering why we really need them. So I will leave you with that question and move on to tell you about the **most** important mission that we have in Iraq right now – CSM Butler's grass.

CSM Butler has taken great pride and honor to ensure the beautification project of FOB Danger is greatly enhanced by his patch of grass outside of SYSCON. When we arrived it was a square of dirt and through his diligence and tenacity he has ensured that the 121st Signal Battalion would have a lovely patch of grass. He has been know to spend countless hours ensuring each blade of grass has been properly watered and

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has not been disturbed by the feet of soldiers, who have been **strictly forbidden** to walk on this grass. But rumor has it that during the field grades spring break they will be using this specific patch of grass for their football game only to be followed by their

daily sunbathing hour. So if I still have a job next week, I will provide you with photos of the game and sunbathing, and the battle that is sure to follow once the CSM finds out they used his grass.

Until next week, we miss you and we love you all. Please continue to send your support. It truly is appreciated. Have a great week!!

—BN Adjutant, CPT Miller

HHC, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION

Tough Corner

This week we will concentrate on the DTAC which is constantly on the move to all of the hotspots in the AOR.

DTAC On The Move

Greetings from the ancient city of Babylon! Here soldiers from G6 HHC, along with soldiers from C Co Retrans Team and F13 SEN Team, Alpha Co make up one of the hardest working sections here in the DTAC.



We have been providing the 11D ADC-M, BG Morgan with communications that enable the DTAC to command and control all assigned areas from Tikrit, KMTB, Babylon and back again. We have all pulled together as one to ensure that our mission is carried out to the fullest extent. To quickly brief you on what the DTAC does, first, let me tell you what the acronyms stand for, "Division Tactical Operations Center." The DTAC continuously supports decisive

and shaping operations by coordinating and synchronizing the immediate tactical requirements of elements committed to the division's decisive and shaping fight. It receives posts, analyzes, and distributes combat information and tactical intelligence from higher, lower, and adjacent units that support close operations. The DTAC is capable of deploying by air, rail, ground, and sea, and displacing by ground or air while controlling maneuver forces engaged in close operations. The DTAC conducts 24/7 operations with the support of the following sections; G2, G3, G6, FSE, ENG, ADADO, DCHEM and Air Force elements. In short, we control the FIGHT!



CW3 Freeman and SFC Brown are the G6 OIC and NCOIC. They ensure that the ADC-M has constant communications via SIPR, NIPR, Voice, VTC and Commercial communications

while making sure that every need of each soldier is addressed. Chief really believes in training—he can be a fanatic at times. On the radio side of the house SSG Rowe and SGT Robles head up the Shark Team with their soldiers, SPC Barclay and PFC Quinonez. The Shark Van is the primary communications shelter for TACSAT, FM, HF and TOCNET communications. Since October we have been trained on the operations of the PRC-150/117, PSC-5, SINCGAR, TOCNET, SEN operations and Automation. Pretty much everyday we learn something new, we OJT twice a week. With every jump we make across Iraq each one presents us with new challenges in setting up and tearing down, it keeps us on our toes as 31Unifoms (our military specialties).



As for F13, lead by, SSG Reese and SGT Hubbard and team members SPC Lacaille,

SPC Burns, PFC Escobedo, and PV2 Pirak, this is the hardest worked SEN team in the network. F13 provides the DTAC with SIPR, NIPR and Tactical voice communications. F13 are always the last ones allowed to break down with some times with only an hour notice, to be in convoy order, and ready to roll. When arriving on site they are always the first ones to set up. Looking at what's up gold you wouldn't know F13 is ever out of system or has jumped, other than the fact that their icon has jumped all over the screen. Yes they break a lot of generators but the communications never suffers. They have used SMART-T, LOS and even a LOS radio to radio shot using an OE 254 cable, what ever it takes to bring in the shot they can, will, and have done it.

On the automation side of G6 we have the best team of 74s in the Division. They include SGT Ballou, SPC Rodriguez, PFC Little, and PFC Jackson. They are responsible for SIPR, NIPR, Tandberg, Server operations and computer support and repair. Working along with F13 and the 31Us the DTAC's communication can be operational in less than one hour. Once communications are up and running, establishing the network, monitoring and troubleshooting help keep the DTAC on top of its mission. These soldiers have written a user friendly Continuity Book to assist not only themselves, but any organization that may run into problems with their automations. Technology changes everyday and these 74's welcome the challenge. Shoot, move, and communicate is how the mission

gets accomplished. Here is a picture of some children we see everyday.



So there you have it, if you feel you have what it takes to be a part of the DTAC.....let us know we're always, check this out, looking for a few good soldiers. ONE TEAM, ONE FIGHT!

BY PFC Jennifer Quinonez

I wish all of you a wonderful week, until next week. Take care!

A COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION

This week our travels will take us through beautiful Iraq touring many of the areas in the historic "Sunni Triangle" region. No news account you will see of this area on CNN can truly do it justice. The splendor and grandeur of it all can only truly be enjoyed through the ballistic windows of an up armored HMMWV. So put on your protective vest and Kevlar helmet and let's get started.

Our travels took us first to FOB Dagger. Unbeknownst to most of us, SPC Dickerson of SEN team F72 is a barber in his spare time, and nothing is more valued on the battlefield than a buddy who can cut hair. Most FOBs have barbers who cut hair, so we save the battlefield haircuts for more austere conditions but SGT Gardner is a man who

values not only his time but his money and so decided to try to save a few dollars by asking Dickerson to cut his hair for him. Dickerson agreed and they moved to the bathroom which would make for easy clean up after the hair cut. You see, SEN teams F12 and F72 live in a palace with bathrooms and swimming pools and all manner of comforts the rest of us don't have. But I digress.

Once inside the bathroom they were careful to close the door so as not to wake up SPC Dupree, who had been on night shift and was getting his beauty sleep. SPC Dickerson cut SGT Gardner's hair and after he was finished, SGT Gardner remarked that it was awfully muggy in the bathroom due to no air condition-

ing and that he couldn't wait to get the door open so he could enjoy some cool air. SPC Dickerson put an ear to the door to make sure they hadn't woken SPC Dupree up. After hearing some faint snoring, Dupree attempted to open the door and it was then that our pair discovered that the door had locked itself after they closed it. Thinking quickly, Dickerson looked around for something to open the door with. It was then that he found some dental floss someone had left on the sink and began attempting to pick the lock with it. Surprisingly after several minutes, the door was still locked. bathroom due to no air conditioning and that he couldn't wait to get the door open so he could enjoy some cool air. SPC Dickerson put an ear to the door

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During this time Dickerson tried to remember all of the movies he had seen where someone had picked a lock with dental floss. Unable to remember any, he produced a stainless steel butter knife. Even in the comfort and opulence of the palace at Dagger, they use plastic cutlery in the dining facility, so how or why Dickerson had a butter knife remains a mystery. Perhaps he is a cutlery aficionado. Perhaps he was starting his cutlery set for when he finds Mrs. Right, it's just something we may never know. SPC Dickerson tried for several minutes to pick the lock with the butter knife with no results.

SGT Gardner began to regret that SPC Dickerson was a barber in his spare time and not a lock pick. Deciding they had no choice, they attempted to wake up SPC Dupree by banging on the door and yelling Dupree's name at the top of their lungs. When the door didn't open they listened attentively and heard only faint snoring coming from the room outside.

SGT Gardner then looked out the window. "There's a thin ledge that goes around the palace, all you have to do is climb

out, walk around on the ledge, not fall off, and find an open window to crawl back in." "Why am I the one that has to do it?" Dickerson asked. "Because you're the lowest ranking and therefore the least mission essential" SGT Gardner replied. Dickerson contemplated this thought as he wondered how much damage someone could actually cause with a butter knife.

SGT Gardner, picking up on the fact that Dickerson was less than enthusiastic about the window idea and having no intention of doing it himself immediately went back to work on the lock with the floss. Again, surprisingly, the door remained locked. Dickerson then took his turn with the butter knife and was eventually able to get the door open. As they exited the bathroom they heard only faint snoring. That evening when Dupree reported in for work SGT Gardner asked him how had slept. "Like a baby" Dupree replied. "Thanks for keeping the noise down for me."

Our travels next took us to FOB Summerall where we had just missed a visit by the actor Vince Vaughn. You may have seen him in such films as "Old School" and the newly released "Dodge Ball." The F71 SEN team was able to get his autograph and watch his latest release with him. I don't know if it is a coincidence, but Vince's visit coincided with the recent opening of a new dining facility on Summerall. No more MRE lunches for our F71 crew. While no one actually saw Vince Vaughn eat in the new dining facility, the timing had to have been more than coincidence.



PV2 Wyrembek gets an autograph from Vince Vaughn

Here on FOB Speicher, SGT Waldrop from SEN team F11 celebrated his birthday this week. The team wanted me to relay the heartwarming story of what happened when they surprised him early one morning with a birthday cake prepared by the chefs at the 701st MSB dining facility. Moved by the display of caring and affection by his teammates, SGT Waldrop began to tear up. "You guys, this really means a lot to me" SGT Waldrop said with a choking voice "I want to give you all a hug." Hugs were exchanged as tears fell from SGT Waldrop's eyes. He was barely able to get out his next sentence between sobs "Hugs are the only birthday presents I need, but if you have any chocolate, that would be nice too." Raise your O'Doul's non-alcoholic malt beverage in a toast to SGT Waldrop's Birthday!



A teary eyed SGT Waldrop

We had two promotions this week here on FOB Speicher and

one at FOB Remagen. PFC Gibbs, from the mighty Alpha Company motor pool was promoted to Specialist. SPC Gibbs is a generator mechanic who has been dealing with special challenges while deployed to Iraq. All power on the FOB comes from generators, so SPC Gibbs has the pleasure of not only dealing with late night calls when mission essential communications assemblages lose power but also when generators that provide electricity for Playstations, televisions, DVD players and the like, stop working. No matter the time of day or night, Gibbs ensures that commanders are not without communications and no Alpha Company soldier is without the ability to play their favorite video game or view the latest DVD release.



SPC Gibbs after getting a celebratory promotion soaking

You may remember very re-

cently seeing PV2 Cantrell being promoted in the Desert Voice. This week he is making another appearance as he was promoted to Private First Class. PFC Cantrell has been doing an outstanding job at F22 supporting the 601st Aerial Support Battalion. At his current promotion rate, he may be Sergeant Major by the time we redeploy to Germany.



PFC Cantrell

We traveled to FOB Remagen for Second Lieutenant Carbone's promotion to First Lieutenant. We spent the day with the soldiers from Node Center 50 in celebration of the promotion. One thing we discovered during our time there is that FOB Remagen has the best dining facility in the middle east, hands down. This best kept secret is nestled snugly between the concertina wire and the barren desert plain of Remagen. I highly recommend it if you're in the area.

LT Carbone took over first platoon just as we were leaving Germany. There is no greater test of a brand new Second Lieutenant than tasking him to take his platoon into combat. With the help of his outstanding NCOs, LT Carbone has done that and more. He has done an outstanding job and we look forward to more great things from him in the future.



LT Carbone getting pinned

The soldiers of Alpha Company are doing great things everyday. There simply is no way to capture everything in this newsletter. R&R is in full swing and we're getting as many troops home to see their families as we possible can. Mail is flowing on a somewhat regular basis and the supply lines keep good food headed our way. Things are getting better everyday. Wish you were here. XOXOXO

B COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALON

Greetings from FOB Warhorse!! Like every week, things have been going pretty good for us. The weather is nice, if you like it scorching hot, the network is "green", everyone is in good health, what more could one ask for? I know, I know how about a vacation? I know everyone is

looking forward to getting their much deserved R&R from here, and every month we get every one out that we can. In July we had 22 people get R&R, and for August it is looking like we will get 24 slots. Granted that does not seem like a lot of slots, but every slot counts, each month we

get closer and closer to getting everyone home. Now everyone getting R&R is still not a guarantee, but as long as I have slots, I will fill each and every slot I can.

This week I wanted to focus on some of the "unsung" heroes of the company, some of the folks that do not get the credit they de-

serve for the work that they do. And do not get me wrong we cannot continue to be successful without guys like SPC James and the other operators in the Node Center.



SPC Jamesso is actually checking the SIPR connections

In every case, the Node Center operators would not be able to do their jobs without the work of the V3 section. SSG Dale and his section work tirelessly each day making sure all of the line-of-sight links are in and solid. Without those links being in and solid, the Node Center would have nothing to do. There are some outstanding soldiers in the V3 section that are always doing the little things to make the company and the platoon successful, like before every convoy they make sure the phone in my truck is working, which is no easy task. I have seen Majors get fired for not being able to get a phone working, yet these guys do it quietly all the time. They don't just do it for me, there are trucks from all of the units here on Warhorse, that stop by to get a thumbs up by the soldiers in our V3 section. They tend to get overlooked every now and then. But there is not a day that goes by that I do not thank my lucky stars that NC52 has such a great V3 section.

There is another group of soldiers that constantly work under

the radar of everyone in the company. Now they get much accolades for the roles that they play when we roll on convoys, and I have made a couple of off-beat jokes about them not doing any work. But I only say that because deep down I know that they were busting their butts that day. This group of soldiers are our beloved mechanics. Yes, it is true that they get many high praises for being the main part of the convoy team, but it is their actions when we are not on the road, that sets them apart. They are always working to better the company and more importantly keep the company running, literally. Without SGT Hansen and PV2 Scherger we would never have a generator that works, they are always making sure that these machines are running, because without them none of our shelters would do anything. SPC Sargent has managed to become a first-class welder, and has made it safer for everyone on the convoy team, by adding additional armor to many of the trucks, to include the ones that had add-on armor applied. SPC Burns is one of the most essential personnel in the motorpool, without him we would never have any parts to fix our trucks and generators. Once again I thank my lucky stars that we have such a great motorpool.



SGT Hansen



SPC Quick and SPC Rich



SPC Burns and SPC Johnson

Now I know I have left numerous people off the list of "unsung" heroes of this company. Everyone here in this company is a hero, just by being here and doing the right things everyday. Everyday I thank my lucky stars that I am a part of this great company.

Now I must say we work and play in a unique environment, not only are we here in Iraq, but the number of different units that are on Warhorse sets it apart. One of the units many of the soldiers have met up with are soldiers from the Republic of Georgia, a former Soviet Union state, there is a little over a company's worth of light infantry soldiers here, working side by side with the U.S. Forces and Iraqi National Guard.



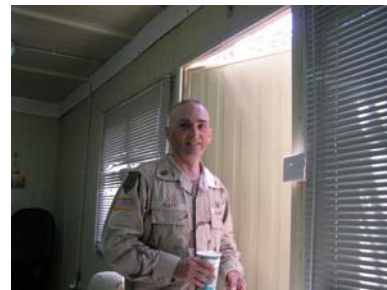
Georgian Soldiers

There are also National Guard soldiers here on Warhorse, and many attached to the company. Now there are a lot of people that knock the National Guard and Reserve guys, but I will be the first one to say, that they are a true asset and essential to our deployment. Since the National Guard and Reserves come from their civilian day jobs, they bring with

them a skill set that is not common with many active duty soldiers. When it is time to pack our bags and leave this country, I for one will thank every National Guard soldier that is currently a part of this company because they have helped to make this company very successful.

Well that about wraps it up from Warhorse this week. 1SG Peaytt says hello to everyone back at home or wherever you may be reading this at. I finally got him to stand still long enough to get a good picture of him. There are some other "unsung" heroes out there that I would like to thank as well, and they are you, the readers, and the families of the soldiers of

this company. My hats off to you, all of you, the Army has asked all of you to put up with a great deal during this deployment and I know that are soldiers want more than anything to see their families and loved ones again. Thank you for all that you do. Take care and have a great week!!



1SG Peaytt heading out to his "office"

C COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION

Good Day once again from FOB Danger in Tikrit, Iraq –

Another week has gone by in the desert. Over 165 days completed now – can you believe it? Although time can never go fast enough to get us home, the days are ticking by faster all the time thanks to the continuation of the mission and the support of our family and friends back home.

This week started out with the greatest news short of redeployment – REENLISTMENTS!! On Monday, in front of the Division Main Palace, SPC (P) Duwayne Petty and SPC James Bowser re-enlisted in this great Army for 5 more years. SPC (P) Petty and SPC Bowser are friends, co-workers, and all around outstanding soldiers who are always ready for whatever mission comes their way. It was an honor and privilege to be a part

of this reenlistment ceremony. STAY ARMY!



SPC (P) Petty and SPC Bowser sign their reenlistment paperwork



CPT Poston came back to FOB Danger to reenlist SPC (P) Duwayne Petty



CPT Longwill reenlisted SPC James Boswer

On Monday night, Charlie Rock decided to take down all of the evil-doers in the next universe by linking four X-boxes and four TVs together for a MEGA HALO death match. We played a "free for all" game against each other with the first person to 50 wins. With as many as 14 people playing against each other at one time, it was definitely a fast paced game. Next, we teamed up for a Red vs. Blue showdown. The

Blue teams successfully teamed up to save the universe. HOO-RAY!



SPC Nicholas Smith, SGT Benjamin Growden, SPC Clifton Johnson and SSG Jason McGowan compete with 10 others in MEGA HALO night!



SPC Patrick Molitor and SSG Jair Morehouse battle on another X-

box across the room.

A new decoration around the Charlie Rock Headquarters is a new company sign – tactical brown and discreetly placed so as not to give away too much to the enemy. Where did the building go, you may ask? It is OP-SEC – we cannot say!



CPT Longwill and 1SG Brown pose in front of the new Charlie Company sign on FOB Danger

R&R slots for August were released this week, and Charlie received another great allocation of slots. With the R&R program in full swing we're happy to send more and more folks home for a

much needed and well-deserved break. We are even more excited to welcome back each soldier as they return to duty and hear the great stories from their adventures back home. While it's tough to say goodbye again, everyone agrees that the support from the American public in the states has been amazing. There are many cases where strangers would come up to a soldier in uniform and say, "Thanks for your service" or buy them a drink at the airport bar. It is truly those genuine acts of kindness that make us all stand a little taller and reminds us of what we're fighting for.

Throughout the routines of the day, as always it is your prayers and support from family and friends that keep us poised and focused. Please keep the care packages coming, every little taste of home sends morale through the roof! Until next week – ROCK STEADY!

B COMPANY, 125TH SIGNAL BATTALION

Hello to everyone! We are now entering into our 6th month in Iraq. On the downward slope some might say, but for us work progresses and we continue to improve communications, force protection and our living conditions. This past week we continued to push our own soldiers out on R&R working on our goal for the month and we conducted a normal but very exciting convoy to the Tikrit area. We visited Node Center 62 and had a very small BBQ at FOB Speicher followed by the hottest night's sleep in my life in Speicher's visitor quarters (no kidding, the sweat pooling in our eyes kept waking us up) and promoted 1LT Sutton here in Kirkuk prior

to his command directed R&R leave. Node Center 63 and Headquarters platoon conducted layouts of our field gear and counted ammunition to make sure soldiers had the proper amount to protect themselves. A normal week of normal events, accented by the incoming rockets and mortars, exciting convoys, promotions and soldiers departing and returning from R&R leave.

Node Center 63 conducted numerous layout inventories. These inventories were conducted to ensure all assigned equipment was present and accounted for. Layouts of the soldiers personal equipment (TA-

50), IBA, earplugs etc., took place in the CHU living quarters. All other inventories/layouts were done at the individual team sites and were inspected by the Platoon Sergeant, SFC Smith, and Platoon Leader, 2LT Langley. The platoon wire team continues to work on the largest infrastructure improvement project in 1st Infantry Division. We will focus next weeks' entire newsletter on the accomplishments of this team.

Node Center 62 received the company convoy team this past week for an overnight stay and a BBQ. The platoon is almost a shell of its former self with the number of soldiers currently out

on R&R leave and the perception was that the convoy team was actually larger than the platoon. We returned SPC Kaimulua to his home at FOB Speicher. He was recruited to work a wiring project for Node Center 63 to build up the communications infrastructure of Kirkuk, but was missed so sorely by Node Center 62 and SGT Atkinson that we returned him. He is now assisting her and working on a large wiring project for 121 Signal.

Headquarters continues to repair things, track things, and do paperwork with exceptional skill. The motorpool smoked its division level inspection and was quoted as the best motorpool of all the separate companies in the brigade combat team, and good enough to almost beat the forward support battalion. Our automation sec-



SGT Macias driving B6 during the convoy

tion received some new trainees this past week. SPC Cusimano and PFC Busby went over to assist in what is easily the busiest place in the company. SGT Balthaser and SGT Brust attended training on a signal system called a Promina. This is a commercial communications system that we installed here to provide more robust and redundant communications to the brigade.

We conducted two convoy's this past week. Both were hot. The average temperature in a vehicle right now is 130 degrees. It is so hot we had water bottles actually melt. You can set a water bottle on the deck in the middle of the vehicle and the water will get hot enough to brew coffee. Weapons get so hot they cannot be touched without gloves. So set back and picture this smoking hot environment along with the normal dust, goats, goat herders, and beautiful Iraqi desert while I tell you a quick story.

(Warning: This story is more than a little embellished for reader enjoyment!) For our second convoy of the week, we departed on what has become a normal quick two day convoy. We made two changes to our normal routine. First,

with the manning shortages we have due to pushing people out on leave we have a shell of our "experienced" convoy team. Therefore, for the convoy we are describing we used a team of what some in the Army would politely label as "FNG's" and for politically correct reasons we will just label as 'New guys'. Second, we tried to conduct this normal two day event in one day. To protect the innocent we will not name any of the players but call them by their well known nicknames **(these are honestly the nicknames these soldiers are known by)**. Our wrecker, aptly named 'B69', was manned by a motivated, but young crew of mechanics. The nicknames for the crew are Sleepy, Boo Boo Jenkins, and Twerp. The other key players belong to truck 'B420' and again to protect the innocent, are nicknamed Grumpy and Dopey. The other two trucks, B8 and B6, were manned by Pimp Posse #2, Stickman, Hele On 6, Moody Carpenter, Droopy, Mad Max, and some soldiers going on R&R. The story focuses on Witchy Poo and getting her and her truck home and the goal of at all costs avoiding a sweltering night at FOB Speicher.

We were getting ready to depart FOB Speicher on our way home to FOB Warrior. We were departing late with the goal of completing a normal two day convoy in one day. We were departing the fuel point, sort of an Army gas station, and heading toward the gate when Witchy Poo's



SGT Parker getting pinned by SSG McNear and SGT Horne



SGT Parker and CPT Campbell after her promotion

truck stalled and would not start. Witchy Poo starts yelling and cussing. Dopey sits there. We called for help and SFC Wright from Node Center 62 sprang into action and immediately arrived to jump us. Why did he have to do that? Well, to explain that we have to backpedal the story.

On every convoy we take '69' our wrecker and mechanics. This time was no different. Our normal mechanics were replaced by Sleepy, Boo Boo Jenkins, and Twerp. In their desire to do a good job they serviced the entire wrecker the night before by candlelight. Since they serviced the truck by candle light they forgot to hook everything backup. They got it almost right, but not quite perfect. Halfway through our convoy to Tikrit, at a spot smartly named "Midland" the wrecker overheated. We made the not so wise decision to leave the crew of mechanics and the wrecker at Midland to let them repair the wrecker. Not realized till later, we just agreed to leave ALL of mechanics at Midland and the tools, jumper cables, tow bars, etc. Consequences to be felt later, i.e. the fuel point at Speicher, where we just left off....

Back at the fuel point....Witchy Poos truck dies, she yells, Dopey sits ... SFC Wright jumps it (again because our jumper cables are at Midland with our mechanics) and cracks jokes about what will we do if the truck dies on the highway. We laugh it off and start forward and 420 dies again. Not so funny now.



PFC Busby manning the gun

SFC Wright has departed and cannot be reached so we call for help from the local signal company. They promptly respond and two mechanics arrive. Both being members of a division that has not updated its equipment since World War II, they had never seen our type of truck before...Dopey seeing an opportunity to be undopey teaches them a quick class on the LMTV. Meanwhile we contact Twerp up at Midland.

Twerp, Boo Jenkins, and Sleepy realize the problem of being the FIRST convoy mechanics that left the convoy and spring into action and conduct the FIRST teleconference vehicle repair ever conducted in Iraq. Twerp, via a phone, actually guides the hand of Witchy Poo and Pimp Posse #2, who has jumped into assist, and repairs the truck from afar. All cheer when they hear we are on the road. They cheer, not out of happiness for us, but because the NORMAL convoy mechanics might not bust their b\$!ls now for leaving the convoy without mechanic support.

We are rolling out the gate and we discover that every

time 420 stops, 420's engine dies....Witchy Poo yells, Dopey sits. So we pull up to the jump the truck again with "acquired" jumper cables (reference mistake described above). We jump the truck and Grumpy slams it into gear to roll forward. Unbeknownst to Witchy Poo however, Pimp Posse #2's arm is caught in the truck and is about to be pulled down the road, so we quickly jump forward, grab him and save him, but he knocks the BRAND NEW HMMWV door forward to be caught by 420 as it rushes forward and rips the door from the frame and the door handle flies through the air. Stickman, belying his FNG status, quickly grabs 550 cord and 100mph tape and repairs the door in time for us to rush after 420 and 8.

Knowing now that 420 cannot stop, we send Droopy and his boys ahead in vehicle 8 to clear traffic and make arrangements to take the Tikrit Bridge. The Tikrit Bridge is normally closed for repairs but free of traffic, and the detour pontoon bridge is usually jammed with traffic. Mad Max, Moody Carpenter, and Droopy are the perfect group to make "arrangements" for use of this normally unauthorized route and blast ahead of us. Unfortunately, Witchy Poo and Dopey, being witchy and dopey, have a different agenda and decide to skip the Tikrit bridge and head for the pontoon bridge. This leaves us in a quandary....what do we do. Well we decide with long-armed Stickman waving madly

and Pimp Posse #2 at the wheel we can clear any traffic. We radio to vehicle 8 to turn around and catch up and we take the lead of 420 and head for the crowded pontoon bridge.

PP #2 Honking the horn and Stickman waving madly we proceed down to the crowded pontoon bridge. The pontoon bridge is down on the river in an old Iraqi neighborhood and we have to pass down curving roads with usually hundreds of cars and people. There are actually two bridges and both usually have traffic backed up for a mile or more. We knew we were taking a risk, but we did a quick risk assessment and decided we could mitigate the risks and make this happen. Iraqi Civil Defense and Iraqi Police seeing us waving and honking think we are some vital mission and quickly jump into assist....pulling civilian vehicles off the road, setting up road blocks, and thoroughly assisting us in keeping the roads clear. Basically we tested the partnership of Iraqi and American forces to make this complicated maneuver happen. Moody Carpenter, driving 8, rushed like Mario Andretti to catch up to us from downtown.

We cleared the two bridges, cleared the crowded neighbor-

hood and headed into open terrain. A few more obstacles a head of us awaited. First was the traffic circle full of shopping stalls and a market...not an obstacle in our mind as we just needed to turn right and keep going. We sent 8 ahead again to clear traffic and make a rendezvous with our wrecker. Witchy Poo, again had different plans, and decided the easy right turn was "Too Easy" or just decided she could not pass up a shopping opportunity and decided to make a long right turn right through the Tikrit marketplace. With shopping stalls flying through the air and people dodging to get out of way, chickens learning to fly and little kids pointing and giggling at the crazy Americans, 420 proceeded to drive through the traffic circle, not around it, and onto the road north.

With what we could only hope was the last of our adventure over we headed home. The sun was setting the temperatures were dropping so that things stopped melting. The conclusion of the story and the adventures of Witchy Poo, Dopey, Stickman, Sleepy, Boo Boo Jenkins, Moody Carpenter, Mad Max Knaus, Droopy, and Pimp Posse #2 will have to wait till next week. Hele On!



F16 in Kirkuk



SPC Cusimano filling out his voting registration form.



SSG Herring crimping a CAT-V cable

A COMPANY, 115TH SIGNAL BATTALION

The soldiers in Alpha Company have done phenomenal this past week. The picture below is of the

A/115 patrol team replacing the CHU at RR50 that CPT Long wrote about last week. Soldiers in

Alpha will do anything to keep signal up for our subscribers.



SSG Gandy, SPC Duke, SGT Henson & SPC Peck and SGT Tank standing on top.

SPC Harris our talented Public Affairs Officer is back from R&R, so you can once again enjoy her stories. Enjoy the article below written by SPC Harris:

With the last nail driven on their new MWR, Alpha Company

of the 115th Signal Battalion is back in the construction business. Initial work began this week on new living quarters for the company's motor pool soldiers. Led by Staff Sergeant Charlie Newton, the troops are wielding hammers and saws once again. The 20 X 24 foot building will help to alleviate the crowded conditions for Alpha Company's headquarters section.

Since arriving in Iraq, the Alabama National Guard unit has given new meaning to "home improvement." Staff Sergeant Newton has proven to be the company's very own "Tim the Tool Man." A carpenter in his civilian job, his skills were never in question. However, Staff Sergeant Newton's crew here was inexperienced – to say the least. In true Alpha Company "adapt and overcome" style, the soldiers have conquered the various building tasks. The latest fin-

ished project, the company MWR, has been christened "Newton's Gun Rock Café".

Regarding the new Motor Pool living quarters, the framework and roof is complete. Once finished, the structure will become home to approximately eight soldiers. The entire building is expected to wrap up by month's end: another mission accomplished for Alpha Company.



SSG Newton works on the new Maintenance living quarters.

B COMPANY, 279TH SIGNAL BATTALION



The Army's MWR program looks out for the morale and welfare of soldiers and provides recreational facilities and events. A small, though important, part of their mission is providing phones and internet to soldiers stationed around the world. Company B,

279th Signal Battalion, has been tasked with providing the largest of three of these "internet cafes" at our location in Iraq. A major reason that we were tasked for this mission is that we have "data assets," that is, soldiers who work with computer networks.

We have between 800 and 1000 soldiers a day using the computers and phones to stay in touch with family and current events.

Over the last few days, we have been building booths for the phones and computers. This will allow the users to enjoy a sense of privacy in their conversations. Staff Sgt Julius Moore calls the

project "a concerted effort" because several of our personnel have volunteered to help. When we again open our doors, we will have 28 computers, 11 Segovia phones, and 24 AT&T phones. Soon we expect to expand our services even more, with a total of 50 computers and 20 Segovia phones.

There are six individuals representing each section of our operation that sign people in and out, check phones and computers for damage, keep the area clean, and answer any questions. There are also four personnel who maintain the system, from installing satellites to contacting

our service provider to maintaining the computers and servers.

Staff Sgt Julius Moore, from Jasper, is the NCOIC of our MWR facility. He sets schedules, makes sure everything works right, and handles questions and comments. At home, he is a teacher and coach at Walker High School. He says that the students and faculty have been very supportive and have sent packages, letters, and emails.

Moore has almost 22 years in the military and served in Operation Desert Storm with the 101st Airborne so he knew what to expect, though he says this experience has been a little different.

He misses his wife and three children, and was saddened by having to miss two of their graduations.

He says, "Thanks to the people of Jasper, especially those at Walker High School and Northside Baptist Church, for all of the prayers and support."

Staff Sgt Anthony Taylor, of Huntsville, is the network administrator on our secure network system and helps with the MWR

facility. At home, he is an Electronics Technician for Solutia, in Decatur. With 16 years of service, he knew "that one day I would be called, and regardless of how political it can get, I'm still a soldier."

Taylor is married, with four children. "I like to keep reminding them that I miss them and love them and I'm doing this to keep life better for them."

One thing that he was impressed by was architectural beauty of the Presidential Palace in Tikrit. "It was not the gold-plated stuff that impressed me, but the craftsmanship--from the marble floors to the sculptures on the walls, everything was hand carved."

He wants to thank the people at Solutia, "they know who they are," at Fees and Burgess Law firm, and all the people in Huntsville who have supported him.

Sgt Damon Manders, from Huntsville, helped to introduce the battalion to computer networking in 1989, and continues to be an important part of the network administration team. "When we first started doing data, it was not nearly as impor-

tant as it is now; people were very suspicious of computers." Now they are used for email, ordering parts, maintaining records, and basically, for everything we do.

He has been in the Alabama National Guard for 16 years, most of which were spent in Headquarters Company of Huntsville, before being attached to Company B for this deployment. "I have been in the military this long because I think it's important," he says. His wife, Christy, supports him, noting all of the benefits they have received over the years. "It's about time we gave something back." His children, Sarah and Lily, are proud of what he is doing.

To supporters at home Manders says, "Thanks for everyone's prayers and support."

These soldiers provide a way for hundreds of soldiers to talk to or email their families every day. There is no better way to keep up morale so far from home.

SPC Jason A Stinnett

C COMPANY, 711TH SIGNAL BATTALION

Hello again from the other side of the world. Another week has come and gone and that means we are another week closer to coming home. To keep our morale high, First Sergeant Teddy Taylor arranged for some of our soldiers to talk to their families live on the radio! WABB from Mobile, Alabama helped facilitate the calls between soldiers and family members. As seen in the pictures, our soldiers were all

smiles even while waiting their turn.



SPC Renee Stuckey talking to family



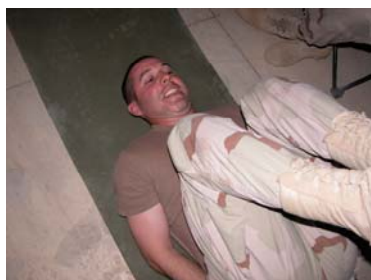
SFC Harold Glass waiting his turn



SGT Nathan Adams waiting in his field

In the Node Center, SFC William Bodiford and SGT Daryl Weeks keep busy by working on their "abs". After days of carefully studying fitness magazines and making a work out schedule, they finally begun. "Young" SGT Weeks appears to be giving the "older" SFC Bodiford breathing tips while he is down and feeling

the pain. (Or is he?) Of course then there is the "young" fitness guru, LT Beber providing proper dos and don'ts. These abs seen here might soon be featured on FOB Danger's next fitness magazine. (Good thing there really is no such magazine).



SGT Weeks knees to chest



SGT Weeks advising SFC Bodiford



SFC Bodiford cracking up!

CHAPLAIN

I became the pastor of a small country church while still in college. This was my first taste of ministry and little did I know how much I had to learn and how difficult it could be. My first few months there were very discouraging. The church failed to grow and a couple of families even left to go elsewhere. My public speaking abilities were poor at best...I think I even took a nap or two during my sermons. Some of the church's leaders were unhappy with me over a building program they had initiated before I arrived. And it didn't help that I was a "city boy" trying to shepherd folks that I had little in common with.

I became so discouraged that I began to question quite a bit about my ministry. I thought; Maybe God doesn't want me here, or maybe I'm not spiritual

enough, or maybe I'm not smart enough to do this. I even began to doubt whether I was supposed to be a pastor at all. It was a very hard time for my family and me. Then one Sunday, Brother Arthur and his wife, Mrs. Ellerea, invited us over for dinner. He was a deacon in our church and this invitation shook my wife and I up. We had been told that if we were ever invited over to their house for dinner, it was because I had REALLY messed up. So we went with a lot of anxiety.

It was during dinner that evening that Bro. Arthur broached the subject of the church with me. My wife and I held on to each other's hands under the table and braced ourselves for what was certainly going to be a lashing. Then he looked me straight in the eyes and said, "You're doing a great job and we're very proud to

have you as our pastor. You keep up the good work and God will bless your efforts." At that moment I thought I would cry. All the built up anxiety, worry and uncertainty simply disappeared. We left their home that night with a new confidence and sense of purpose. Someone had encouraged us.

You, the 121st family, have done an extraordinary job of living with this difficult deployment. I know that at times it seems like you can't go on and the questions come more quickly than the answers. But allow me to encourage you as Bro Arthur did me, "You are truly doing a great job and we're very proud that you're part of this effort. Keep up the good work and God will bless YOUR efforts